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association have brought them in close contact with each other and their cultures are in certain fields inter-related, the two communities retain their own socio-religious identities. The Muslims are in a minority in the population of the village; but they are a close-knit group in socio-religious matters. All Muslims belong to the Sunni division. Among them there are no great inequalities of wealth and possession, and consequently there is, within the Muslim community, no evidence of class distinction. In matters affecting their socio-religious life they act as a separate and self-sufficient group, rarely seeking the help, assistance or advice of their Hindu neighbours. One of the remarkable characteristics of the predominantly Hindu rural society of India is that non-Hindu communities have also been influenced by the caste-hierarchy of Hinduism. Even the non-Hindu groups have had to fit somehow into the rigid framework of the caste-dominated social system; and while they have always remained outside it, never having been regarded as Hindus, they have nevertheless acquired a quasi-caste status in accordance with their general social, economic and political position. As Hyderabad was formerly ruled by a Muslim, his co-religionists had a privileged position in the affairs of the State. Their social status in the rural areas has always been more or less equal to that of the agricultural castes; although from the point of view of religion the Hindus have always regarded them as inferior. Nevertheless, a clean-caste Hindu can sit down with a Muslim, and the less orthodox can even touch them without having to take a subsequent purificatory bath.

The Hindu social system, founded on the division of society into 'castes', presents a social framework of great complexity. The traditional *varna* system, modified in the course of the evolution of Indian social polity, divides Hindu society into five major groups. The first three of these, viz. Brahmins (priests and men of learning), Kshatriyas (rulers and warriors) and Vaishyas (traders) are regarded as *dvija* or 'twice born'. According to Hindu ritual only they are allowed to undergo the *upanayana* ceremony which symbolizes their spiritual re-birth and entitles them to wear the sacred thread. The fourth group is composed of numerous occupational castes who are relatively clean and are not classed as untouchables. Finally, in the fifth major group we can place all the untouchable castes. This classification is accepted by the Hindus all over India. The relative positions of the different groups,

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564 more or less similar position but are both endogamous and do not
264 inter-dine. They accept food at the hands of the castes higher than
582 themselves but not from those which are lower. Similarly, the Sakali and the Mangali have a similar caste status, but they do not inter-marry or inter-dine. But again, both the Sakali and the Mangali will dine with the Sale and the Gaondla and all the other castes higher than themselves. The Vaddar and the Pichha-Kuntla will eat with neither the Sakali and the Mangali nor with the untouchable Malas and Madigas, but they can take food at the hands of all castes higher than themselves. The Erkalas will eat from the hands of all castes except those of the Mala and the Madiga. The Sakali and the Mangali do not accept food from the Erkala. The Erkala and the Pichha-Kuntla will accept food from the Vaddar, but the Vaddar will not accept food from the Erkala and the Pichha-Kuntla. Finally, the Mala and the Madiga will eat at the hands of all the higher castes, but the Mala, considering himself superior of the two untouchable castes, will refuse food touched by a Madiga.

The position of the Panch Bramha group is peculiar. They constitute a consolidated and self-sufficient group. They do not accept food at the hands of any other castes, nor do any other castes accept food touched by them. Here the position differs vitally from that found in north India, where the carpenter, the blacksmith, the worker in bell-metal, the goldsmith and the carver of images constitute different endogamous castes which do not, as they do in this area, inter-marry and inter-dine. Their social status is neither very high nor very low. Everywhere they rank lower than the 'twice-born' *varnas* of Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, but they are not regarded as impure and their status is infinitely superior to that of the untouchables. In the area under study while the Panch Bramha group is regarded as 'clean', even the untouchable Mala would refuse food touched by them, and it is only in recent years that the Madigas have started to eat from their hands. 'Their very touch poisons the food. How can we accept it?' the people are often heard to remark when they are asked to explain their refusal of food touched by any of the Panch
[881] Bramha castes. The Panch Bramha castes wear the sacred thread
564 of the twice born and refuse food even from the Brahmin. It is probable that their social exclusiveness reflects an attitude which was developed in ancient times when a great fusion of Aryan and

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844 Among the Muslims an expectant mother is sent for the birth of her first child to her parents; subsequent deliveries generally take place in her own home. During her confinement she is attended by a professional midwife. An amulet is often tied to the
846 mother's waist to facilitate delivery. Within a few hours of its birth the child is bathed and clothed. His grandfather or an elderly relation says the prayers. A date is then dipped in honey and a drop or two of that honey is put into the mouth of the newborn child. Milk should not be given to the child before this has been done. On the sixth day the *chhatti* ceremony is performed.
[431] For this relations from both mother's and father's side are invited. They bring with them gifts for the child, comprising of sets of new clothes, dolls and playthings and possibly a silver spoon. The child
553 is dressed in new clothes. On the seventh day its head is shaved, and the elders give it a name. Depending on the means of the family, feasts are given to friends and relations on the sixth and seventh days, The mother continues to be out of the normal round of life for forty days. On the fortieth day she is bathed. The midwife is given her remuneration on this day. Once again there is a feast, and presents may be given both to the child and to the mother.

● 881 *Pre-puberty Rites.* Among the Hindus, the Brahmin and the Komti perform the sacred thread ceremony for the boys before they attain puberty. At these rites the Brahmin priest officiates. The Panch Bramha group of artisan castes also perform this rite; but they do not invite the Brahmin. Their caste-priest conducts the ceremony.

862 In the Muslim community a boy must be circumcised any time between the age of two and ten. A few relations are invited for the occasion, the boy is garlanded and then the operation is performed. It is usual to give small presents to the boy at this time. Another pre-puberty rite is the *bismilla* ceremony done both for
[869] boys and girls. This initiates the child's religious instruction, for from now on it is taught the alphabet and is gradually enabled to read the Koran. In Shamirpet the *bismilla* ceremony is performed for all Muslim children, though relatively few of them learn to read the holy book.

881 *Puberty Rites.* Among the Hindus the girl's first menstruation is attended by elaborate ceremonies. She is secluded for five days, and at the end of this period is bathed and dressed in new clothes.

RITUAL STRUCTURE

For three to ten days the household gods, as well as those at the family's favourite shrine, are worshipped. For the latter the girl is taken out with the village women in a procession, and the Madigas are summoned to play their musical instruments. With the exception of the Brahmin and the Komti, in all other castes the women from the neighbourhood assemble every afternoon for singing and dancing at the house of the girl for whom the ceremony is being performed. Among the Muslims, at the time of first menstruation the girl is secluded for seven to eleven days. At the end of this period she is given new clothes, which she wears after taking her bath. 881 ●

Ear and nose boring of the girls is done before the age of puberty among both the Hindus and the Muslims. But this act has no religious rites attached to it. 852

Marriage. In the community people are as a rule married when they are adults; only in some cases are adolescents married. Child-marriage is rare. Out of 380 first marriages investigated by us, only 14 could be described as child-marriages. 582

Among the Hindus, negotiated marriages are common. People show an unmistakable preference for cross-cousin marriage when the subject is discussed with them; but out of the 340 Hindu marriages analysed by us, only 18% were cross-cousin marriages, the rest being negotiated marriages into unrelated families. Muslims permit both parallel and cross-cousin marriages, and indeed regard them as highly desirable. Our sample of Muslim marriages is not quite adequate, but out of 40 marriages fully investigated 19 were between cousins. Among the agriculturists, and to a lesser extent among others, it is necessary for the girl's parents to pay a dowry to the boy. This accounts for the relatively few marriages by service. When the parents of the boy are too poor even to arrange for the normal expenses of an average wedding—involving expenditure on the buying of clothes and ornaments for the bride and bridegroom, marriage feasts and other incidental expenses—the boy may serve with his prospective father-in-law for a stipulated period, at the end of which the latter marries him to his daughter at his own expense. Marriages by exchange may be arranged between two families to economize on the dowry; and further they may be celebrated at the same time so as to complete two weddings for the expense of one. Cases of run-away marriages occur at times, but they are 583